

## REJOICE IN CHRIST

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If any of my readers were invited to dine with a neighbor, and on reaching the house were to find the windows barred up, and the rooms nearly dark, you might conclude that the place looked more like a funeral than a feast. If a husband, on his return from Europe, should find no one to welcome him at his threshold, he might well suspect that domestic love had vanished from the desolate spot, and might wish, too, that he had remained in foreign exile. Reverse the picture. Suppose that your home coming had not only set the house ablaze with light, but every one under the roof aglow with gladness. Your joy and their joy would be full to overflowing.

Now, in these two opposite scenes you have the opposite feelings with which two different types of professed Christians regard that glorious Savior—whose name is now ringing in Easter carols around the globe. The first is a type or a poor ill conditioned professor of a religion that kindles no joys, whose dim lamp smokes more than it shines, and who always carries his colors at half-mast. The other is the hale and leal-hearted disciple whose soul is lighted up—in all weathers—by the presence of a Savior believed, and a Savior loved. A truly healthy Christian is a happy Christian. When a baby frets, the mother at once says: "The poor child must be sick." When a Christian frets and sulks and worries, and has no appetite for the "sincere milk of the Word," it is evident that something ails him. His heart is out of order. He certainly is not a holy man, for the word "holy" signifies *hale*, *sound*; and holiness means *wholth*, or health of heart toward Jesus Christ. Soul-health breeds joy; soul sickness breeds disquiet and misery.

Paul was a superb specimen of a robust, healthy Christian, whose appetite for Gospel meat was voracious, and whose teeth never chattered with ague-fits of doubt. The light that flashed around him on the way to Damascus never went out; he was a shining believer, beaming and blazing on unto the "perfect day." While a prisoner at Rome, and past threescore years of age, he writes a letter to his Philippian brethren that has the cheerful ring of those songs which he had once sung at midnight in Philippi's dungeon. In this jubilant epistle he exclaims: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice!" The word "Lord" here unquestionably designates Jesus Christ; and the preposition "in" means that Christ is the element and source of his joy. Nor was it a mere transient flash such as some Christians catch on extra occasions; it was like the deep ocean whose pulse beats on thru the night, and whose waves sparkle in the morning sun.

Every blood-bought believer who realizes what a condition of sin and guilt his atoning Lord has delivered him out of—what a revolution Christ has wrought in his heart—what peace and power Christ has given him, and what a heavenly inheritance is made sure to

him—every such believer ought to march home to glory shouting! As that eloquent expositor, Dr. Eadie, has said: "To rejoice in Christ is to exult in him, not as a dim abstraction, but as a living person—so near and so loving, so generous and so powerful that the spirit ever turns to him in grateful homage, covets his presence as its sunshine, and revels in fellowship with him." The joy of our Lord is our strength.

Paul does not exhort us to be happy except on rare and extraordinary occasions. No doubt there are special seasons in every Christian life that bring their peculiar raptures. The trio of disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, Paul caught up into the third heaven, John in full sight and hearing of the celestial splendors, had their rapt ecstasies. Every devout Christian has some peculiar exaltations of soul at times that do not become permanent. We could not sustain the strain. The journey to heaven is not all on mountain-tops; much less is it a soaring continually on triumphant wings. It is a march up-hill and down—oft thru swollen rivers and thru vales of the death shade. Are we to be happy then? Yes, every moment of the journey. The Apostle makes no limitations; "rejoice in Christ *always*." If our joy depended on our surroundings then it would fluctuate like the thermometer in March. But the divine command is to rejoice in Jesus *under all circumstances*. That well-spring of Christ within us never runs dry. To those who keep his commandments the Master has promised that his joy would remain in them and that their joy would be full.

Poverty strips away many comforts, and brings many hardships; but it does not drive Christ away. He enters many a lowly door at which no rich man's carriage ever halts. Sick beds are not couches of ease; yet I have seen pallid faces that were bright with glimpses of the beatific vision. Does God expect you and me to rejoice in times of sharp bereavement? Verily he does. That is the very time to enjoy Christ. He never dies. And when the coffin is borne out of our doors, our loving Elder Brother walks beside us all the way, speaking words of infinite comfort as he did when he walked with his disciples on the darkening path to Gethsemane. The grave in which we lay the beloved form is a cold, dreary cavity; but the glories of the Easter morn are playing over it and the clear, rich voice is sounding, "I am the resurrection and the life." The presence of Christ can make the darkest waves at midnight phosphorescent with holy joy. Brethren, God never sends a trial on us so bitter that faith cannot suck honey out of it; nor a lot so hard but Christian trust can draw oil out of the flinty rock.

Rejoicing in Christ is a duty. Not to do it is a sin. If a bad temper toward a fellow-creature is a sin, how much more is a bad temper toward our Savior. Some professing Christians seem to mistake gloom for godliness, and a morose countenance for piety. There is no Christian laughter in them; even

the gospel feast of fat things is turned into a fast. Their code of conduct reads, "I say unto you all *complain*, for the times are hard; I say unto you *scold*, for everything goes wrong; I say unto you *groan*, for life is full of trials, and this world is a vale of tears!" Such people are a caricature of Christianity, and a disgrace to the religion they profess. Christ never marches his people homeward to a dirge any more than he does to a dance. "Me ye have with you always; can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?"

It is said that a flock of pigeons who have alighted in a field of lavender carry away the sweet perfume on their wings. Even so do hours of heart communion with Jesus make all our lives serene with peace and fragrant with holiness. Such a life is the beginning of Heaven; and Heaven is a state of everlasting joy. The holiest place in God's universe is the happiest. Let us stop parsing Heaven in the future tense, and begin to sing its hallelujahs now! Let us rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ always; and again I say let us all rejoice!

Brooklyn, N. Y.

A New England clergyman was for some time disturbed by the members of the choir. Finally, he found a way of quieting them. After the long prayer one Sunday he announced a hymn, as usual, and added: "I hope the entire congregation will join in singing this grand old hymn; and I know the choir will, for I heard them humming it during the prayer."—*Lewiston Journal*.

Blessed day; sweet day of rest, the day on which the Lord arose.

## EASTER-TIDE

EMMA A. LENTE

O bells, within the steeples sway,  
It is the glorious Easter Day!  
Gladly we leave the Lenten fast,  
The fear and gloom are overpast,  
The sealed stone is rolled away,  
A risen Christ we sing to-day.

O blossoms, yield your incense sweet,  
For cross and altar fair and meet;  
In full array are set the palms,  
In sign of victory; our psalms  
Are jubilant with joy and faith;  
Our Lord is Lord of life and death.

O hearts, that since last Easter-tide  
Have been with sorrow crucified;  
Have given your best-beloved to God,  
Yet, restless, failed to kiss the rod,  
Rebel no more, but on this day  
Put doubts and selfish tears away.

O Earth, the thrill of Easter-tide  
Pervades your bosom deep and wide;  
Your chilling sleep again is done,  
Smile up unto the smiling sun,  
Forget the gloom and blighting frost,  
Your charms are not forever lost.

O graves, wherein such treasures lie,  
Infold them yet; but, by and by,  
On some glad, glorious Easter Day,  
The King, the King shall come, and say:  
"Give up, O graves, your sacred store,  
For death is vanquished evermore."